

### Crisis in American Education.

In a recent article Mr. E. A. Windship very pertinently puts the difficulties encountered in popular education in America where the educational system must depend upon the whims of the common people for support. He says:

Whatever form the educational crisis may take, the issue will be whether all children shall get the most out of the public schools, or whether interested parties will get something at the expense of the children.

This will determine whether there are to be scientific educational experts in leadership or bosses, political or otherwise. An educational boss is but one removed from his political stepfather.

A scientific educational expert is a long way from the "fool reformer," the crank theorist. Such an expert thinks the schools are for the greatest good to the greatest number of children, and not an experiment station for the glory of the self-styled expert.

No legislation will accomplish the enthronement of the ideal expert. No bill can be framed that will make or meet the crisis. It is interesting to watch the raising of microbes. It is a process of elimination. With comparative ease a student in the laboratory raises the microbes of a common boil and of typhoid fever, but the most patient and highly specialized experts of the world have been at work for years in trying to raise the cancer microbe, and recently only has any one reached a condition of elimination through which he dared to suggest that this most vicious microbe had been set apart. The whole scientific and medical world is singing praises to the man who has at last found the most elusive of microbic criminals.

The raising of a crisis is of much the same nature. England's great municipal reformer was in this country when Seth Low and others were trying to make a campaign to divorce municipal administration from national politics, and our reformers sought his aid. He had to decline to speak on the subject, since in England he was waging a campaign for municipal reform by making national politics responsible for city administration. There is never a crisis until that stage is passed. In reform you are always changing the issue, and whatever you get you wish you had something else.

Here are a few of the reforms which the best citizens are trying to secure in different parts of the country in the last decade of the century.

Appointing instead of electing school boards.

Electing instead of appointing school boards.

A smaller board.

A larger board.

A shorter term of service.

A longer term of service.

Appointment of the board by the mayor.

Appointment by the judges.

Appointment by a special commission.

Giving the school board more control of the finances.

Taking from the board some of its financial power.

Nearly every one of these "reforms" has been accomplished somewhere, and about as soon as it is accomplished the same general class of people begin to reform back again. Just now we have entered upon a new class of reforms which are liable to repeat the experiences of the past unless a crisis is made.

What we need to know is what are the fundamental conditions under which a crisis can be made. I do not hesitate to say that it is wholly a question of placing the system from bottom to top on a scientific educational expert basis, and this will necessitate the entire overthrow of every phase of bossism, political and professional. Any reform that leaves this crisis unmade and unmet is a mere make-shift. We may, however, eliminate other microbic influences by this process, and thus prepare the way for raising the crisis all by itself by and by.

America is a condition and not a theory. The schools are strictly American in condition as well as theory, and through this fact the crisis must be studied. This necessitates asking a few questions and studying them seriously.

Can we remove educational affairs from the people and still have the people pay the bills? Can we take from the city government all voice and vote regarding the schools and still have their financial championship? Can we take from the school board all voice and vote regarding teachers and school buildings and retain the active support of that body? We cannot answer these questions off-hand. They must be considered with great care. It has been the theory of the distinctively American champions that each of these questions must be answered in the negative, and yet every reform has been conducted upon the basis that each can be answered affirmatively. Every reform that has failed thus far has come from the fact that the reformers have answered each of these questions affirmatively and the people negatively. This shows how complicated the affair really is, and the treatment must be exhaustive and heroic. There is no cause to fear for the final outcome of the schools or of America. If the

world is to evolve a higher civilization and a nobler manhood, it must be done within our borders. If political, social, and religious evolutions fail here, they fail forever, apparently. By unsuspected means, as well as at an unanticipated moment, every step in American progress has come.

We cannot by violence or neglect thwart the purpose of destiny, but we may increase the cost to ourselves and the world by our ignorance or willfulness. Had we chosen to liberate the slave by any means just and equitable to master and man, we should have saved a multitude of lives and vast treasure. We could delay, but we could not thwart the purpose of destiny. We may postpone the evolution of the better school, but we cannot permanently prevent its coming.

The school is a part of the general American life. It is in it and of it, and cannot be divorced. It is not a thing apart from the national household, but is a part of the domestic economy, affected by the general spirit and prosperity.

Each one of us is bound to make the little circle in which he lives better and happier. Each one of us is bound to see that out of that small circle the widest good may flow. Each one of us may have fixed in his mind the thought that out of a single household may flow the influence that shall stimulate the whole commonwealth and the whole civilized world.—Dean Stanley.

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